

**Before the
Federal Communications Commission
Washington, DC 20554**

In the matter of:

Request to reopen the petition for)	
Rule making in the Matter of)	
Section 68.4 of the Commission's Rules,)	RM-8658
Hearing Aid-Compatible Telephones)	

**The Reply Comments of
The Alexander Graham Bell Association for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
("AG Bell")**

On December 8, 2000, the Alexander Graham Bell Association for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (AG Bell) joined the overwhelming majority of the parties submitting comments to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC, or the Commission) supporting the petition of the Wireless Access Coalition to reopen rule making for 47 C.F.R. §68.4. Most of the comments were from deaf or hard of hearing individuals whose stories demonstrated the undisputed fact that Americans who rely on hearing aids or cochlear implants are being denied access to digital wireless technology. AG Bell is particularly pleased that a significant number of individual citizens took the time to inform the Commission of the problems that they faced in trying to obtain digital wireless telephone service.

AG Bell is a national organization comprising parents of children who are deaf and hard of hearing, professionals who serve hearing impaired children, and adults with hearing loss. Over half of AG Bell's members are parents. The organization

provides information and support and conducts advocacy on childhood hearing loss, emphasizing listening and speaking as a vehicle for acquiring spoken language. AG Bell children and adults utilize technology fully in order to maximize use of their residual hearing to the extent that they can. With hearing technology, telecoils and telephone amplifiers, many AG Bell constituents are able to use voice telephones. We are concerned about ensuring access to wireless telephones today and improving upon access in the future as more and more people in our society rely upon wireless telephones in their personal lives and in the workplace.

Only two comments, those of the Cellular Telecommunications and Internet Association (CTIA)¹, and of Verizon Wireless proposed supposed, technical reasons why, despite the fact that digital cellular service is unavailable to many, if not most, hearing aid and cochlear implant users, the exemption should continue. But even these comments give credence to the clear simple truth that not enough has been done. AG Bell believes that the comments of Verizon Wireless and CTIA do not accurately reflect the situation which currently exists for deaf and hard of hearing Americans who would like to obtain digital wireless service. We further believe that the arguments against reopening rule making presented by CTIA and Verizon Wireless were based on incorrect interpretations of the Hearing Aid Compatibility Act (HAC)². Consequently, AG Bell offers the following reply comments in response to the

¹We note that the Cellular Telecommunications Industry Association has, as of January 1, 2001, changed its name to the Cellular Telecommunications and Internet Association. All citations to documents of this association will use the name included in that document.

²47 U.S.C. §610.

inaccuracies presented by CTIA and Verizon Wireless.

I. Background

AG Bell was surprised that the comments of CTIA and Verizon Wireless largely ignore the promises made by the wireless industry in conjunction with the Wireless Summit process in 1996. As part of these discussions, the industry agreed to provide a number of interim services that would allow limited access to digital wireless telephone service for some users of hearing aids and cochlear implants.³ The proposal, further, promised that the short-term measures would be followed by the implementation of long-term changes in digital cellular telephones that would make the service widely accessible to individuals who depend on hearing aids and cochlear implants. Despite such assurances by the industry, by December 2000, five years after the Summit, there have been no changes to digital wireless phones to make them accessible to deaf and hard of hearing Americans.

³Proposal of the Digital Wireless Industry - Revised Proposal – April 29, 1996, pp. 3.

The industry members who were part of the summit process proposed to “work in a manner that they deem appropriate, to provide accessibility to digital wireless phones for individuals with hearing loss.”⁴ According to the industry proposal, these interim solutions would be accomplished within eight months. The industry’s proposal also agreed that for the long term “a representative cross-section of digital wireless phones will be manufactured and available in the U.S. that through features that are integral to the design of the phone or otherwise, are accessible to persons with hearing loss including hearing aid users”⁵

⁴Id.

⁵Id.

The problem with these promises lies in the fact that they were all made with the qualification, that the manufacturers and providers were to “work in the manner that they deem appropriate.” This has meant that after fifty-five months, the only accomplishment in the path to accessibility for hearing aid and cochlear implant users is the anticipation that a standard to measure the level of interference “ . . . will be finalized by late January 2001.”⁶ Beyond this new promise, which we note does not actually make any phones accessible to people who use hearing aids or cochlear implants, the wireless industry has done nothing to make digital wireless phones accessible to deaf and hard of hearing consumers. Despite the lack of progress, comments made by CTIA and Verizon Wireless inaccurately state that no changes to the Commission’s Rules are needed because there are solutions in place. That statement ignores the fact that these “solutions” had initially been presented as “interim” solutions, and that the industry had promised additional changes.⁷ Further, AG Bell believes that the comments of CTIA and Verizon Wireless present an inaccurate reading of the underlying statute, 47 U.S.C. §610. Finally the comments of CTIA and Verizon Wireless present an inaccurate picture of the market for digital wireless services that is faced by the six million Americans who depend on hearing aids

⁶In the Matter of HEAR-IT NOW Petition for Rule making Section 68.4(a) of the Commission’s Rules: Hearing Aid Compatible Telephones RM-8658, Comments of The Cellular Telecommunications & Internet Association, December 8, 2000, p. 3.

⁷See Proposal of the Digital Wireless Industry, Revised Proposal – April 29, 1996, pp. 3-4.

and cochlear implants.⁸

II. The Federal Communications Commission Should Reopen Rule Making With Respect to 47 C.F.R. §68.4

When Congress passed 47 U.S.C. §610, it directed the Commission to establish rules governing access to telephone service. The statute also directed the Commission to exempt wireless telephones from the “initial” rules.⁹ Congress did not intend that this exemption for wireless phones to be permanent. The statute specifically directs the Commission to “periodically assess the appropriateness of continuing in effect the exemptions provided by such regulations for telephones used with public mobile services and telephones used with private radio services.”¹⁰ Based on this provision, the Commission announced in 1989 that it would review the exemptions every five years.¹¹ This has never been done.

⁸National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders, National Institutes of Health at http://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/pubs_hb/hearingaid.htm#2

⁹47 U.S.C. §610(b)(2)(B)(i).

¹⁰47 U.S.C. §610(b)(1)(C).

¹¹See Before the Federal Communications Commission, In the Matter of: Section 68.4 of the Commissions Rules, Hearing Aid-Compatible Telephones, F. Graefe, M. Ruger, D. Umberger

Counsel to HEAR-IT NOW, p. 2, citing Access to Telecommunications Equipment and Services by the Hearing Impaired and Other Disabled Persons, 4 FCC Rcd 4596, 4600 (1989).

Further, Congress intended for stakeholders in this industry to have a voice in the determination of future regulations. The statute explicitly authorizes the Commission to initiate rule making on the application of interested parties to waive the exemption:

The Commission may, upon the application of any interested person, initiate a proceeding to waive the requirements of paragraph (1)(B) of this subsection with respect to new telephones, or telephones associated with a new technology or service.¹²

Based on this provision, the Wireless Access Coalition petitioned the Commission to initiate proceedings to consider waiving the exemption for wireless telephone providers. Responding to this petition, the comments of CTIA and Verizon Wireless erroneously state that the statute does not allow the Commission to respond to this petition by opening formal rule making. Both comments assert that the statute, specifically subsection (b)(2)(C), does not allow the Commission to waive the exemption unless it makes a four part determination:

- (i) such revocation or limitation is in the public interest;
- (ii) continuation of the exemption without such revocation or limitation would have an adverse effect on hearing-impaired individuals;
- (iii) compliance with the requirements of paragraph (1)(B) is technologically feasible for the telephones to which the exemption applies; and
- (iv) compliance with the requirements of paragraph (1)(B) would not increase costs to such an extent that the telephones to which the exemption applies could not be successfully marketed.¹³

¹²47 U.S.C. §610(b)(3).

¹³47 U.S.C. §610(b)(2)(C).

This assertion is based upon an inaccurate reading of the statute. AG Bell contends that these requirements are facts which must be determined by the Commission as a part of its formal rule making, not a threshold test before opening rule making. The statute does not direct the Commission to refrain from rule making until such conditions are met. Rather, any actual changes in the regulations, including a waiver or limitation of the exemption for wireless phones, must meet these conditions. In fact, the subsection imposes an obligation on the Commission; if it finds that these conditions are met, the Commission must revoke or limit the exemptions.¹⁴ Since the Wireless Access Coalition petition asks only that rule making be reopened, and does not propose any specific modification, it is not possible at this stage of the rule making process to determine if the changes meet the statute's conditions. Therefore, the CTIA and Verizon Wireless' unsubstantiated assertions that these conditions are not met should not be the basis to refuse the petition to initiate rule making.

Indeed, if this requirement does establish the standard that must be met before the Commission reviews the exemption, the effect would be to place the burden on people who use hearing aids to prove that such changes are technically feasible. Clearly, this is an impossible hurdle for any party not directly involved in the wireless industry, and so, it would have the effect of imposing a de facto bar to citizen petitions for rule making. Such a bar would not only violate Congressional intent, but it would illegally restrict the fundamental right of Americans to petition their government.

**III. The Commission Should Waive the Exemption from 47 C.F.R. 68.4,
Authorized by 47 U.S.C. §610, for Digital Wireless Phones**

¹⁴47 U.S.C. §610(b)(2)(C)

The comments of Verizon Wireless and CTIA both state, without any supporting documentation, that no revised regulations can meet the test established by Congress for revised regulations in the Hearing Aid Compatibility Act. AG Bell disagrees with the industry position and believes that there is currently a sufficient basis for the Commission to waive the exemption of wireless telephones from the disability access requirements of the HAC Act.¹⁵ We believe that the Commission can establish revised rules which revoke, or limit, the exemption if those rules meet the statutory test. Our belief is based on the language of the HAC Act requiring that the Commission “shall revoke or otherwise limit the wireless exemption” if it determines that four conditions (supra) are met. We believe that these conditions can be met. We will look at each condition in turn, in reference to the comments of CTIA and Verizon Wireless.

A. A Revocation or Limitation Is in the Public Interest

AG Bell believes that the answer to this requirement is self evident. The consistent trend in American law has been toward ensuring that all Americans, including those with disabilities, have equal access to the full range of opportunities offered in the United States. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act¹⁶, the Individuals

¹⁵47 U.S.C. §610.

¹⁶29 U.S.C. §794.

with Disabilities Education Act¹⁷, and Section 255 of the Telecommunications Act¹⁸ are just a few examples of the Congressional commitment to disability access.

Further, and directly related to the Wireless Access Coalition's petition, all of the comments, including those of CTIA and Verizon Wireless, acknowledge the right to access to wireless communications of all people including those deaf and hard of hearing citizens who depend on hearing aids and cochlear implants. For example:

¹⁷20 U.S.C. §1400 et. seq.

¹⁸47 U.S.C. §255.

Verizon Wireless understands the needs of persons with disabilities to be able to access telecommunications products and services, including wireless handsets and service on the same terms as persons without disabilities¹⁹

CTIA also acknowledged the public interest in ensuring access for users of hearing aids and cochlear implants in their 1995 comments: “The wireless industry is committed to providing all Americans access to wireless telecommunications services.”²⁰ They repeat the acknowledgment in their most recent comments: “Despite these challenges the Summit participants have remained steadfast in their efforts . . . to provide the benefits of digital wireless telecommunications to all consumers, including consumers with hearing impairments.”²¹ Clearly, none of the stakeholders contest the public’s interest in working toward full access for all citizens.

B. The continuation of the exemption without revocation of limitation will have an adverse effect on hearing-impaired individuals

¹⁹In the Matter of: Section 68.4 of the Commission’s Rules Hearing Aid-Compatible Telephones RM-8658, Comments of Verizon Wireless, p. 1.

²⁰In the Matter of: HEAR-IT NOW Petition for Rule making Section 68.4 of the Commission’s Rules: Hearing Aid Compatible Telephones RM-8658, Comments of the Cellular Telecommunications Industry Association, July 17, 1995, p. i.

²¹Comments of CTIA, December 8, 2000, p. 2.

Similarly, it is beyond question that people with hearing impairments who use hearing aids and cochlear implants are faced with adverse effects when they attempt to use digital wireless telephones. Of the twenty-eight comments posted to date, twenty-two are from individuals who have had difficulty using digital wireless phones. In addition, AG Bell's own initial comments included a representative sample of the responses that we received as a result of polling our members about their unsatisfactory experiences with this technology.²²

We further note that as of December 27, 2000, the Commission had received 62 complaints with regard access problems related to the HAC Act which it has referred to the appropriate service providers for resolution.²³ All of these individuals face adverse consequences as a result of the current situation.

²²See In the Matter of: Request to Re-Open the Petition for Rule making Regarding Hearing Aid Compatible Telephones RM-8658, Petition for Rule Making Section 68.4(a), The Comments of the Alexander Graham Bell Association for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, December 8, 2000, pp. 6-7 and 9-10.

²³www.fcc.gov/cib/dro/comments/hac_comments.html, (visited December 27, 2000).

The comments of Verizon Wireless attempt to present the position that deaf and hard of hearing individuals are not adversely affected by the current situation because accessories are available which can, in some situations, be attached to some digital wireless phones which may allow access to users of hearing aids which have telecoils.

AG Bell responds that the inductive neckloop device is useable with some models of only two brands of wireless phones, Nokia and Motorola.²⁴ We also note that since the digital service providers develop their own relationships with the handset manufacturers not all carriers offer even one of these potentially compatible phones. For example, Sprint PCS does not offer either Nokia or Motorola handsets with their service contracts, even at extra cost.²⁵

Although the use of such devices may increase accessibility for those individuals whose hearing aids include a telecoil, the cost of the devices, as well as the inconvenience, and discomfort is borne entirely by the user. We particularly refer to the comments of Nancy A. Dietrich and of Dana Mulvany both of whom note the cost and difficulty of using a neckloop²⁶. These personal descriptions leave no doubt that, even in the minority of case where the accessory devices are appropriate, the cost and inconvenience have an adverse effect on the hard of hearing individual. More significantly, such devices are only effective for hearing aids which have telecoil

²⁴Comments of AG Bell, p. 4.

²⁵See HAC complaint of John M. Flanders at www.fcc.gov/cib/dro/comments/hac_comments.

²⁶Comments of Nancy A. Dietrich, and Dana Mulvaney...

compatibility. This is currently about one fifth of all hearing aids²⁷, and with the increased use of smaller, in the ear aids that percentage is declining.

Finally, it is apparent that even the industry representatives who have submitted comments with regard to this petition acknowledge that there are individuals who depend on hearing aids and cochlear implants who are adversely affected by the current technology. We note the following statement in CTIA's comments: "... CTIA acknowledges the WAC concern that not enough progress has been made"²⁸

AG Bell asserts that a failure to limit or revoke the exception to the HAC regulations for digital wireless phones will have an adverse effect on most deaf and hard of hearing people who use hearing aids or cochlear implants. Because 80% of hearing aid and cochlear implant users cannot utilize the accessories presented as a part of the so-called "interim solution" to the access problem, and because the minority of users who can utilize this technology are faced with additional expense and inconvenience, there can be no question that the current situation adversely affects these people.

C. There is no basis to presume that it is not technologically feasible to make hearing aid compatible digital wireless telephones

²⁷Mark Ross, Ph.D., Beyond Hearing Aids: Hearing Assistance Technologies, at: www.hearingresearch.org/beyond_hearing_aids.

²⁸Comments of CTIA, p. 3.

AG Bell notes that one of the most important planks in the arguments against reopening rule making presented by Verizon Wireless is the assertion that it is not currently technically feasible to produce digital wireless handsets that are effectively useable by people who depend on hearing aids and cochlear implants. The comments of Verizon Wireless detail the difficulties inherent in producing wireless handsets that meet the definition of compatibility under 47 C.F.R. §68.316.²⁹

AG Bell replies that these assertions are made without supporting documentation, that they are based on misinterpretation of the HAC Act and current FCC regulations, and that they deny the promises made by the industry during the Wireless Summit process in 1996.

1. Verizon Wireless's Comments are Based on an Incorrect Reading of the Regulations

In 1983, the FCC established a set of technical specifications that defined what constitutes a hearing aid compatible phone. Among the elements of this definition is a set of standards which allow the microphone in the phone handset to work in conjunction with telecoil devices which are incorporated in some hearing aids. Verizon Wireless's comments assert that the nature of digital wireless phones makes it difficult to produce handsets, with the currently popular configurations, which meet this standard and therefore it is not technically feasible to produce compatible digital wireless phones. This argument, however, fails to address the purpose and the inherent adaptability of the Commission's regulations, as well as the actual

²⁹Comments of Verizon Wireless, pp. 2-5.

configuration of the equipment used by the majority of deaf or hard of hearing people who use hearing aids or cochlear implants.

AG Bell acknowledges that we do not possess adequate technical expertise to address the problems in designing a handset that contains a transmitter and a telecoil compatible microphone. However, we note that the purpose of the Commission's regulations is not to require manufacturers to adhere to a specific set of standards, but is unequivocally stated in 47 C.F.R. §68.1.

The purpose of the rules and regulations in this part is to provide for uniform standards for the protection of the telephone network from harms caused by the connection of terminal equipment and associated wiring thereto, and for the compatibility of hearing aids and telephones so as to ensure that persons with hearing aids have reasonable access to the telephone network.³⁰

We further note that the regulations anticipate the need for adaptation to address the issues related to new technology. An unwavering adherence to the standards defined in §68.316 would also violate the regulations' requirement that the standards be adapted to conform with changes in technology as explicitly stated in the standards

³⁰47 C.F.R. 68.1, emphasis added.

This standard is intended to be a living document, subject to revision and updating as warranted by advances in network and terminal equipment technology and changes in the FCC Rules and Regulations³¹

³¹47 C.F.R. §68.316. Magnetic Field Intensity Criteria for Telephone Compatibility With Hearing Aids, Part i. Introduction subsection 1.2.

Finally, by defining hearing aid compatibility in terms of technical standards that work with telecoil technology, Verizon Wireless's comments ignore the fact that this feature is not included in the majority of hearing aids and cochlear implants, as well as the fact that currently available digital wireless phones interfere with hearing aids and cochlear implants without regard to whether they have the telecoil device. Only about 20% of the hearing aids used in this country incorporate a telecoil.³² These devices are primarily included in larger hearing aids that are worn behind the ear. As the market continues to move towards smaller "in the ear" hearing aids this percentage is likely to decrease. Despite the fact that they do not have this device, most users of hearing aids and cochlear implants are able to effectively use traditional wireline phones. It is only digital wireless phones which lack the elements necessary to protect hearing aids from their electromagnetic emissions that do not allow effective use by people who rely on hearing aids. AG Bell disagrees with Verizon Wireless, and reiterates the position that hearing aid compatibility should not be defined in terms of specific technical standards but whether the hearing aid user can effectively use the phone.

2. The comments of Verizon Wireless and CTIA do not demonstrate that it is technically infeasible to produce effectively hearing aid-compatible phones

The comments of CTIA and Verizon Wireless also challenge the Wireless Access Coalition's petition on the grounds that it is impossible to entirely eliminate the electronic interference between digital wireless phones and hearing aids. AG Bell

³²Per the Hearing Industry Association

replies that this assertion has been made without supporting documentation. We note the almost total lack of publicly available, scientific information on efforts to solve the problem of interference with hearing aids, caused by digital cellular phones. In fact, the only documented efforts that CTIA cites are those involved in establishing the standard for measuring interference.³³

Considering this lack of supporting data, AG Bell believes that the single most important factor in the absence of hearing aid compatible wireless phones is the failure of the industry to take appropriate steps to investigate and design such phones. We are certain that the industry can do better. We note that the comments of twenty-eight hearing aid users, as well as our own internal research clearly show that accessibility is as much of an issue now as it was in 1996, indicating that no substantive progress has been made.

³³Comments of CTIA, pp. 5-7.

The claim by CTIA and Verizon Wireless's that it is not technologically feasible to make wireless handsets that are useable by people who use hearing aids and cochlear implants ignores the fact that users have found a wide disparity in the amount of interference caused by different models of phones. This point was expressed very clearly in the comments of Dana Mulvaney.³⁴ We also note that our own investigations showed cases where hearing aid and cochlear implant users could use a particular phone in some circumstances (i.e. close to a transmission tower), but not in others.³⁵ We believe that the failure of the wireless industry to investigate these phenomena and to take advantage of the better performance of some digital wireless phones to improve access to people who rely on hearing aids and cochlear implants is clear evidence that the lack of accessible phones is not, as CTIA and Verizon claim, a result of technological infeasibility. Rather it is the result of the failure of the industry to make adequate efforts towards ensuring access.

D. There is no basis to presume that compliance with HAC Act requirements would substantially increase the cost of wireless telephones or telephone service

Neither the comments of CTIA nor Verizon Wireless present any evidence to support the conclusion that compliance with the HAC provisions would have any effect on the cost of wireless phones or service. The only mention of cost is CTIA's reminder that the Commission must "Specifically consider the costs and benefits to all telephone

³⁴Comments of Dana Mulvany, op. cit..

³⁵Comments of AG Bell, p. 11.

users”³⁶

³⁶Comments of CTIA, p. 5.

AG Bell concedes that there may be additional costs associated with making wireless telephones that are compatible with hearing aids and cochlear implants. However we believe that the impact is likely to be negligible, because the cost may be spread among the 108,257,963 wireless subscribers in the United States³⁷. For example, the industry would need to increase its per subscriber rates by ten cents a month to generate an addition \$120 million to fund research and development for hearing aid compatible phones. This would not be so costly as to make service uncompetitive as required by the statute.³⁸ Further, in light of the estimates of revenues in excess of \$600 billion for the wireless industry worldwide, we believe that it is conceivable that the industry will be able to absorb the cost without significant damage to the marketability of its services.

IV. There Has Been Inadequate Progress Towards Providing Access to Digital Wireless Telephone Service for Users of Hearing Aids and Cochlear Implants

³⁷The World of Wireless Communications, www.wow-com.com (visited January 5, 2001).

³⁸See 47 U.S.C. §610(b)(2)(C)(iv).

In its comments to the Commission, the CTIA asserts that no new rule making should be undertaken because the industry has made adequate progress towards providing access to digital wireless service to deaf and hard of hearing individuals who use hearing aids and cochlear implants³⁹. In particular they point to the fact that the University of Oklahoma Wireless EMC Center's study has helped to establish a standard to measure the interference in hearing aids. They state that it is not practical to begin to make changes in the handset technology without such a standard in place. However, the industry promised to work to achieve this standard by December, 1996⁴⁰. Further, the same proposal promised to make other efforts to improve accessibility while, and immediately after this effort.⁴¹ We believe that the best response to this argument was included in the comments of Jack O'Keeffe, a participant in the initial 1996 Summit.

...after the passage of five years, little or no progress has been made...

Although a standard for measurement of hearing aid susceptibility to interference of digital wireless telephones was developed, it has not yet been adopted⁴²

AG Bell concurs with Mr. O'Keeffe that the industry has dragged its feet in

³⁹See Comments of CTIA, p. 9.

⁴⁰Wireless industry proposal, p. 3.

⁴¹Thomas E. Wheeler, letter to Reed F. Hundt, Chairman Federal Communications Commission, May 30, 1996, p. 2.

⁴²In the Matter of: RM-8658, Section 68.4 of the Commission's Rules, Hearing Aid Compatible Telephones, The Comments of Jack O'Keeffe, p.1.

adapting this standard. We further believe that using the lack of a standard as the reason for failing to make improvements in the accessibility of digital wireless phones is unacceptable.

V. Conclusion

The wireless telephone industry was granted a waiver of the Hearing Aid Accessibility Act in 1996 to allow it to introduce this technology without delay. In return, those who have profited from this technology promised to take steps, without legal mandates, to improve access to deaf and hard of hearing Americans. Those promises have not been kept. For five years the industry has grown astronomically and made amazing technologically sophisticated improvements in the ways in which its subscribers gain access to information. During those five years, the hearing aid industry has made efforts to design and market devices that allow their users to use digital wireless phones. Deaf and hard of hearing Americans have struggled with expensive, inconvenient accessories and have experienced long, often frustrating, searches to find phones that they can use. Only the wireless industry, the party which has gained the most from the introduction of digital wireless phones, has failed to make any substantive changes.

The comments of Verizon Wireless and the Cellular Telecommunications and Internet Association argue that despite five years of failure to make any improvements in the accessibility of digital wireless service for deaf and hard of hearing Americans that no changes in the Commission's regulations are needed. These members state that because they face technical challenges, and because they have undergone

extended period of study of a standard to measure interference the Commission should not consider revising its rules.

AG Bell replies that without new, viable, comprehensive regulations, the industry will continue its failure to address the needs of those Americans who depend on hearing aids and cochlear implants. We strongly urge the Commission to reject the incomplete and unsupported conclusions presented in the comments of the CTIA and Verizon Wireless. We further believe that the overwhelming majority of comments supporting the petition to reopen rule making provide a compelling basis to demonstrate the need for change. The Federal Communications Commission has expressed its commitment to access to communications technology for all Americans. Taking action on this issue will have a critical impact on access to new technologies for deaf and hard of hearing people.

Respectfully Submitted,

Donna L. Sorkin
Executive Director
Alexander Graham Bell Association for the
Deaf and Hard of Hearing
2000 M Street, NW Suite 300
Washington DC, 20036
(202)337-5220
(202)337-8314 (Fax)
dsorkin@agbell.org

